

THE SWIFTLY RUNNING WORD

NO. 1607

A SERMON
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AT THE, METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"His word runs very swiftly."
Psalms 147:15.*

A WORD is the expression of the mind. What a man has thought may live and die within himself, but when he wishes his thought to live in the outer world, he embodies it in a word and thus his thought is made known. Thought without expression is as an arm uplifted, working nothing, though it is the mainspring of action. But according to the ability of the man, his thought is carried out into fact if he is able to speak a powerful word of command. Hence, as the garment of thought and the accomplishment of wish, a word is a very important thing. A word is the manifestation of a man. Dryden says—

*"Speech is the light, the morning of the mind.
It spreads the beauteous images abroad,
Which else lie furled and shrouded in the soul."*

"Speak," said the old philosopher, "that I may see you." More of a man is seen in his words than in anything else belonging to him. You may look into his face and be mistaken. You may visit his house and not discover him. You may scan his business and misunderstand him. But if you hear his daily conversation, you shall soon know him! The heart babbles out its secrets when the tongue is in motion. As the full bucket betrays the water of the well, so is a man discerned by his speech. Thus a word takes a most prominent place in reference to all intelligent beings and this is peculiarly the case with the Lord our God. God's word is the manifestation of His secret thought. By it He reveals His decrees. By it He manifests His nature. By it He carries out His purpose. "He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast." If you wish to know God, you must know His word. If you wish to perceive His power, you must see how He works by His word. If you wish to know His purpose before it is actually brought to pass, you can only discover it by His word. When you watch the events of providence you are only observing what the Word of God is accomplishing as He sends it forth into the world. As He said to His servant, Ezekiel, so it is—"I am the Lord: I will speak and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass."

According to our text, "He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His word runs very swiftly." The word, as it comes from God, takes several forms. At first it came forth as a fiat—"Let it be"—and it was. When there were no angels to hear Him; when matter did not exist to obey Him; when there was nothing but Himself, the Self-Existent One, Jehovah spoke and the things which are began to be! Since then, He has spoken to His creatures by the word of command, which should always be obeyed even as David said, "I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your word." The word of the Lord comes forth in the form of a precept from His temple or a statute from His throne and we ought most reverently to treasure up every syllable that God speaks to us in that form, for we are His servants. He also speaks by way of teaching. He instructs us by revealing Himself through His word. All true doctrine is the Word of God and is to be devoutly believed. Our prayer should be, "Give me understanding according to Your word." His word is also spoken in the form of promises rich and free and gracious, the word on which His children live. In this form it is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. It flashes forth, also, like lightning flames in threats, when God dooms the ungodly or warns them of what shall follow unless they repent.

Terrible, indeed, is the word by which Justice takes vengeance upon the wicked! But chief of all and above all is THE WORD of whom John speaks—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the same was in the beginning with God." This is He of whom we read in Revelation, "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God." That word is the Incarnation of God, wherein God has been pleased to manifest Himself more ful-

ly than by all other words or works, for in His Son we see the brightness of the Father's glory more than in all else besides, according to His own testimony—"He that has seen Me has seen the Father." The name of God is written in plain letters in the person of Jesus, so that even ignorant men may spell it out when their eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit.

The person, life, death, resurrection and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ are the word which speaks out the heart of God and in His ministry, our Lord set forth the mind of God most fully, even as He said of His disciples, "I have given them Your word." To all these forms of God's word our text may be appropriately applied, for in each case, "His word runs very swiftly." I shall, first, ask you, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to learn the lesson of the text. Secondly, let us look to the particular instances which illustrate the truth of the text. And then, thirdly, as the Lord shall help us, let us see what teaching we may individually gather from it for our own cases.

I. First, LET US LEARN THE LESSON OF THE TEXT—"His word runs very swiftly." We understand from this sentence, first, that the Word of God, which operated of old, is *still* operating. "By the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." But God did not create the world and then leave it, otherwise it had crumbled back into the nothingness from which it came—"the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word, kept in store." Creation is not like a watch which God has made and wound up to go by itself, but every movement of every wheel of the machinery of nature is dependent upon the constant outgoing of power through the Word of God—for of Him and through Him are all things—and "by Him all things consist."

Our wise men are continually talking of the laws of nature and we know that there are such laws, or, in other words, it is a fact that God usually acts in such-and-such a way. But to suppose that there is any *power* in the mere laws of nature is absolutely absurd! You may make laws in your household that things are to be done in such-and-such a way, but unless somebody carries them out, laws are nothing. Locomotives obey certain laws of motion, but without steam to drive them the laws of motion will allow them to rust in the engine house! There is a law of gravity, but the force of gravity comes not from the *law*, but from *God*. There is a law of growth, but the power by which plants and animals grow is an energy which flows from God. It may be a fact that force operates in such-and-such a manner, as a stream runs in a certain channel, but, as the channel is not the stream, so the *rule* of nature is not the *power* of nature. Man lives and all nature exists by the Word of God, for, "none can keep alive his own soul." It is of our Lord that we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Upholding all things by the word of His power." The word of power with which God made the world is still pulsing through space. When we saw the comet the other evening flaming through the sky, we saw as much of the hand of God as did the angels when, for the first time, they beheld the morning star heralding the dawn! The light of the stars which you and I have seen so many hundreds of times is as much the result of divine power as if, for the first time, those lamps of heaven were hung out in the midnight sky.

The planets move in their mighty orbits with a force which is new every moment. The Lord of hosts orders their marching. The fixed stars abide in their places because the hand which placed them in their sphere preserves them in it! Order is the result of the Lord's might constantly put forth, otherwise would all things run into a carnival of chaos and dissolve into destruction. As the bubble on the breaker bursts and is gone forever, so would the universe be dissolved at once and lost in nothingness were You not there, O God! His word still operates and runs swiftly, even as of old. The heavens and the earth would be dissolved were it not that His word upholds the pillars thereof. Well might they sing of old, "You, even You, are Lord alone; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and You preserve them all; and the host of heaven worship You." Let us go a step further. The Word of God which operated at the first is still operating with the same degree of force. The text says, "His word runs very swiftly," that is to say, it keeps its ancient pace. It has not begun to slacken its speed and we know what that was, for, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes He did fly upon the wings of the wind." There might be a gradual slackening and decline in the forces of nature if they had been created by God and then set to drift by themselves. But as God is, still, everywhere present, working in the heavens and in the earth and in the seas, in all deep places and as in *everything*—all power continually proceeds from the hand of God—and there is no failure in anything.

Creation may, if God so pleases, wax old as does a garment, but the hand which created it is as full of power as ever. The sun's light and all else that is necessary for man will continue, according to the divine appointment, and will never be exhausted while the Lord supplies them. If any natural force fails, it simply means that the divine power is being withdrawn from that particular form of work. But the word of power is the same. If science could prove that any force is waning, we should only believe that God is permitting certain created energies to slacken because He means to bring them to their end, having answered His design by them. Men are always ready to object to the doctrine of the divine working—"All things continue as they were," they say one day. And then another day they say, "All things are declining." Neither declaration is precisely true. There are great changes in the operations of God, but there is no change in the hand that operates! And still, today, as of old, God speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast. This world shall abide as long as God pleases—but when the time shall come, He that once spoke to the deeps and they deluged the world—will call to flames of fire and the earth shall be wrapped in them and the works of men that are therein shall be burned up. No palsy has seized upon the eternal arm—the closing scene of the world's story will be as grand as that with which the chapter of Creation opened! "He faints not; neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding." Yet it is worthy of notice that the Word of God spoken of in the text operates in a *silent* manner. We are told that He sends out His word and melts the ice, the frost, the snow. Did you *hear* that Word of God? You have seen stern winter yield to the breath of spring, and you believe that the genial change was effected by God's word—but did you *hear* a whisper? No, and *none* heard it, for the Word of God in nature is the going forth of His silent will. "No speech, no language; their voice is not heard; yet their line has gone out through all the earth." Still it is called His *word* and I want you to notice that fact because you are apt to think that God in the kingdom of His grace is dependent upon *men's* lips and tongues and words.

I tell you that the Word of God which returns not to Him void is not the word from *my* tongue, but the word from His own mind. God can, if He will, speak deep into the human heart without so much as a whisper from the preacher! His word can enter men's souls though not a single sound is heard! We have known instances of persons who, when far away from the means of grace, have, nevertheless, been reached by the still small voice of the Word of God in their spirits, which Word of God, "runs very swiftly." If God uses tongues and voices, as He generally does, let Him have all the glory that He is pleased to link His potent word to such a feeble agency. But the secret word of power which runs swiftly is entirely independent of sounds and noises, of tongues and ears! This is a fact that should comfort us all and it should make some of you who have been silent try to speak, since God's blessing does not rest on oratory and talent and the like. Have you not marked in this house—I speak without egotism—how, for more than 20 years the people have come together at every service, crowding these aisles and God has saved multitudes of souls? Critics say, "This man is not an orator!" And they speak the truth. I have never cultivated the arts of eloquence, or exhibited the elegancies of language. I speak what I know of God's word and bear my honest witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in such words as come to hand. The almighty Word of God reaches and renews the heart and the more it is allowed to work in an unencumbered manner, in its own natural simplicity, the more victorious it will be! The word, of itself, "runs very swiftly" and carnal wisdom does but hamper it!

Oh to let it lay aside every weight! I could wish that men would take oratory by the ears and hang it up like a felon, for it has been the plague and curse of the Church of God that men try to speak finely and prettily, garnishing their sentences with poetic flowers and polishing them with needless elaboration! Preach the gospel, sir, for *that* is your business! We are not place-hunters, who must please if they would win, but soul-hunters, who seek not to amuse men, but to save them! Proclaim God's word in such words as your heart suggests. Pluck up by the roots the flowers that grow in God's fields and go not to the conservatory of learning and art to gather your fine prose! God will bless His own word, for it is *His* word which runs very swiftly! Yet, note again, according to the text, God's word is most effectual. This is the meaning of the phrase, "it runs very swiftly." None can deny this is the meaning of the phrase, "it runs very swiftly." None can resist it, for God is in it. It is God's will and when God wills it, what matters if all creation wills the contrary? "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The will of God would bear all opposers away as with a flood and sweep them like sear leaves before the tempest. There is little wonder that His word runs very swift-

ly, for if God wills it, how can it be hindered? As it cannot be prevented altogether, so it cannot even be impeded if it is the very Word of God. There *is* a Word of God which may be hindered—His gospel, as proclaimed—it may be resisted and cast aside. But the veritable Word of God, the inward word, the secret will of the Highest is not resisted—it sweetly conquers the human will without violating its free agency and leads men captive in chains which they do not wish to break—it holds them spell-bound by a force which they delight in! And they yield, charmed by the music of the love of God! It is glorious to think that God is still operating in the realm of grace as well as of nature by a power which is omnipotent and this power runs very swiftly.

There is no such thing as *time* with God, to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He may take centuries to accomplish His purposes, but if He wills it, all can be done in an instant! He may lengthen out the drama of providence, even to thousands of years, but this is not for lack of power, for when He pleases, “He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.” God’s word is never slow or lame. Neither can it be said of Him as of the hosts of Pharaoh, that His chariot wheels were taken off so that He drove them heavily. The counsel of the Lord stands forever! “The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” Over your heads, O mortal men, let the voice of this dread thunder roll—The Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Think not because you boast of your free agency that this can deprive Him of His almightiness—He still does as He wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. Who can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” Where the word of a king is, there is power, but what is the power of the word of the King of Kings? It “runs very swiftly.”

II. Thus I have tried to set forth the general truth of God, now LET US NOTICE THE PARTICULAR INSTANCES OF IT. First, God’s “word runs very swiftly” in the matter of creation. What says the first chapter of Genesis about the making or fitting up of this world? It tells us that in its present condition this world was arranged in six days and on the seventh day the Lord rested from His work. Was ever such a word as this? Was ever so vast a deed accomplished in such a space of time? It is possible that the creation of the world had taken place long before, for “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” but even for that first creation He needed no space of time, for His word could create the universe with a flash. The Lord may have allowed ages upon ages to roll by before He ultimately came forth to perform the last upholstering of it for mankind—yet all was done when He spoke. God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” He said, “Let there be a firmament,” and it was so. He spoke into being fish, fowl, and beast, and it was so—“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is”—for His word “runs very swiftly.”

We still see, in the works of nature, the changes which God works. The wind may blow ever so fiercely from the north, but when the Lord commands, it whirls about towards the south and the calm may be profound. But almost in an instant the hurricane sweeps and tosses up the mighty waves of the sea. The vast changes which God works in nature are, to us, gradual in their results, else we should be unprepared for them and catastrophe would follow catastrophe. But still, as far as God is concerned, He acts instantaneously when He wills and as He wills—and His will in Creation is achieved the moment that it comes to be an expressed word! Look further into the field of providence and see how the Word of God has been operating there and has run very swiftly. Consider His providential judgments. God warned men that He would destroy them for their sin. He gave them space for repentance and sent His servant, Noah, to be a preacher of righteousness. He made the ark to be a visible sermon to them. But when, at last, His patience was ended, it did not take Him long to pull up the sluices from below and to open the bottles of heaven from above. How speedily did He cover the tops of the mountains with the destroying waves! Peter tells us that by the Word of God, the world which then was, being overflowed with water, perished. Look further on to the cities of the plain. When they were ripe for destruction, Lot saw the sun rise on Sodom and all was quiet and still as on this Sabbath morning, but in an instant the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and destroyed it. When the Lord came to blows with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, how thick and fast the strokes came till the proud tyrant’s will was broken and he let the people go! Yes, “His word runs very swiftly.” Whether it is to turn the river into blood, or cover the land with darkness, or destroy it with hailstones, or to slay all the first-born of Egypt, “His word runs very swiftly.”

With a word He slew the hosts of Sennacherib and stretched rider and horse in the deep sleep of death. His judgments are amazing! Look at Jerusalem—inquire for the ruins of her temple—see how swiftly God fulfilled His decree of overthrow. Journey to Tyre, or Moab, or Edom; get away to Babylon and Nineveh; go and search and see where mighty empires once rioted in luxury. He told His prophets that it would be so and lo, it has come to pass, for “His word runs very swiftly.” Come behold the works of the Lord! What desolation He has made in the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder! He burns the chariot in the fire, “for His word runs very swiftly.” So also has His word run very swiftly when it has been sent in peace; when God has meant to bless men, how swiftly His angels have taken wing to bring the gift from heaven! Think of Israel shut up by the Red Sea with mountains on either hand. Oh how speedily the Lord descended from on high when He came to the rescue of His people!—

*“On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad.”*

He divided the Red Sea and led Israel through it like a flock of sheep in the wilderness, swiftly coming, by His word, to make a way for them through the heart of the sea. So all through Scripture you will observe that in the afflictions of God’s people they have cried to Him and He has sent His word and healed them! Glory be to the name of our covenant God! In all His works—whether of judgment or of mercy, He tarries not for man, but executes His purpose even as He pleases.

For a moment let us reverently think OF THE ESSENTIAL WORD, to whom I referred, just now, whose name is to be always mentioned with deep devotion. How swiftly He ran upon His Father’s business. As our poet puts it—

*“Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled.”*

The life of Jesus upon earth reached little beyond 30 years, and yet His work was finished before He left this earth for glory. The redemption of mankind, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the finishing of transgression, the fulfilling of the law—all was done in a short season! No, you must shorten that, because the major part of His life was spent in obscurity, doing, doubtless, much, but not doing that part of His lifework which is perceptible to us. In some *three* years or so His Father’s public business was all accomplished! With what diligence He worked! As to the actual atonement, although I conceive it embraced the whole of His life, yet the central part of it lay in His passion and death. In the comet which has lately surprised us, much of the brilliance lies in its streaming tail, but the starry portion, or nucleus, is supposed to be the solid part of it. Even so, the reconciling work of Jesus shines from the manger to the garden and yet the more apparent parts of it are crowded into the few hours between Gethsemane and the cross. In that space was Satan bruised, death slain, hell vanquished, sin wiped out forever, the saints redeemed, God glorified, and the earth purchased out of bondage! In a few hours of agony, and shame, and death our Lord effected all. “His word runs very swiftly.”

What a running that was when our Lord came forth as a Bridegroom out of His chamber and rejoiced as a strong man to run His race! He ran so swiftly for the joy that was set before Him, that He sweat, but not such sweat as yours and mine—it was a sweat of blood—such was the agony with which He ran to achieve the work which His Father had set before Him! He was no laggard. Does He not reprove your tardy footsteps and mine that, in so short a space, so grand, so infinite, so *eternal* a work should have been achieved? “Truly He ran very swiftly.” But now, to leave that point, this is true of the Word of God in matters of grace—“His word runs very swiftly.” I shall be sure to have your deep attention if you know the extreme importance of the truth of God I am about to proclaim, namely, that the Word of God, when it comes to work effectually upon the hearts of men, is able to accomplish its end very swiftly, indeed. I conceive that conviction of sin is, in many cases, if not in all, commenced in an instant! The unregenerated mind of man is like a flint and you do not break a flint by degrees—by *one* blow it is shivered. Here is the mind of man like a dark dungeon. God throws back the shutters and in streams the daylight at once. Conviction is like a wound—the mighty Spirit draws the great bow—away flies the arrow and in an *instant* it has pierced the heart! Through coats of mail of prejudice, that barbed shaft has gone and slain sin in the heart of man and that in a second of time! “His word runs very swiftly.”

I know that God works thus in regeneration. Regeneration is not a work of years—from the necessity of the case the essential part of it is worked in an instant. There must be a moment in which a man is dead and another moment in which he is made alive! There can be no interval in which he is neither dead nor alive. Quickening must be an *instantaneous* operation. There must either be some life, however feeble, or else the man is dead—and the line between life and death must be narrow as a razor's edge. Though you and I cannot see any sharp line between the line, yet there is such a line. A man is either dead or alive. The quickening of a soul into spiritual life remains a proof that God's word "runs very swiftly." So, also, with regard to justification. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, he is justified at once. I can show you that this must be so. A man may be guilty or not guilty, but he cannot be anywhere between the two. He may, according to the legal language of Scotland, be in a condition in which the charge is, "not proven but before God, who needs no proof, a man must either stand condemned or pardoned, and there cannot be an instant between the two." In one moment God says to the guilty, "I forgive you." Pardon is an instantaneous gift! You can be forgiven all your sins in half the tick of a clock and pass from death to life more swiftly than I can utter the words!

How wonderful it is to see the change which the grace of God makes in the human heart in conversion! A man is not turned round and converted all at once, but the commencement of that turn comes at some particular moment and just at that moment it often happens that his most cherished idols come tumbling down! The idolatry of his soul is effectually rebuked. He cannot understand it, but the thing he once loved he begins to hate, while the things he hated, all of a sudden he loves and there is achieved in him a marvelous change! An objector declared the other day that we make out that a character is produced in men in a few hours; that a life-building is run up during a single service! I am not about to deny the charge! The statement is not quite correct, but it will suffice!

We have all heard of the minister who visited a dying woman and was the means of bringing her to a joyful faith in Christ. But before he had left the house she was dead—he was known to say that he found her in a state of nature, saw her in a state of grace, and left her in a state of glory—and all within an hour! And so we do not make much of the power of God to accomplish wonders in a brief space of time! The new birth is a miracle worked by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. It is impossible under any other view of things. If this miracle could be taken away from Christianity, what would remain? Conversion and regeneration remain as the standing phenomena by which Christianity is continually proven to be divine. The Word of God all of a sudden transforms the very nature of men, and they enter into an altogether new state of life out of which there comes a character which glorifies God! The essence of that character is created in an instant! The seed of God out of which it will all come is implanted at once. "His word runs very swiftly" Adoption is also one of these rapid gifts. A man is made a child of God in an instant, for he may not be a child of God and he may be a child of God, but he cannot be half way between. There must be an instant in which adoption is bestowed and that instant I quote to illustrate the text—

"His word runs very swiftly."

Note again, dear brothers and sisters that this is not only true of salvation at first, but it is true of the work of grace in the heart all along. Do you feel dull and heavy this morning? God can revive you in a moment! "Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Have you backslidden like Laodicea? Have you fallen into lukewarmness? "Ah, it will take months," you say, "for me to get back." It need not, for here is Christ's word to Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Open the door and let Christ come in and all will be healed! "His word runs very swiftly." Are you desponding, are you despairing? He can take away your ashes and put upon your head the coronet of beauty in an instant! What said the spouse in the Canticles? "The voice of my Beloved; behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." It need not take a long time for you to be refreshed and restored—Jesus can come with the riches of His grace and straightway make you to rejoice in Him! Did not Jesus work immediate cures on the palsied and the lame? Is He not equally mighty to bless? Our churches frequently require backsliders to wait a long time before they can be received. If a brother wanders, the churches generally deliver him for years to Satan and then, perhaps, try to get him back. But it should not be so! John looked after Peter directly after Peter had been cursing and swearing and denying his Lord. And Jesus, Himself, said, "Go, tell My disciples and Peter," within three days af-

ter Peter had fallen. My Lord's forgiving love runs very swiftly! My Lord's restoring grace is swifter than an eagle's wings! As it is with individuals, so it is with churches. A whole church can be revived on a sudden—no, not only a whole church, but a *group* of churches! No, not only that, but, if God wills it, *all* the churches in Christendom may be refreshed with showers of blessing within another week. "His word runs very swiftly."

Remember how it was at the first. Within a short time after Pentecost all nations had heard the Word of God, so that Paul could say, "Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Like the coming of the morning, the word of the Lord shone forth under the whole heaven right speedily! It will be so again, but we must first be prepared for it. The vessels must be purged before the Master can use them in His great work. If God were to use most Christians and most Christian ministers in their present condition as instruments with which to accomplish His work, we might pass through centuries of centuries before it would be finished! But He can change all this and make His servants to be like angels and His ministers like flames of fire! Many move along in Christ's work at a snail's pace, but if the Lord were to visit the aforesaid trudging fathers and make them leap like a hart with intense desire and bravery of faith—and *then* send His own word by them—what is there to hinder a great revival? Suppose all the church should wake up tomorrow with desires for days of prayer? What is there to prevent God's hearing the united cry of His people? What is there to hinder Him from raising up hundreds of ministers to preach with tongues of fire? What is there to prevent missionaries going forth to the utmost ends of the earth? Who can stay His hand when once He makes bare His arm and comes forth to the fight?

Let us have greater belief in God! We scarcely believe in Him now! We are always measuring the balance to the credit of the missionary societies and counting up the agents. I believe in our excellent societies, but I believe in *God* over the head of them all. I believe in agencies, modes, systems, methods, but I believe much more in *God*, who can do far more abundantly than we either ask or think! May the Lord take us out into the deep and then we shall let down our nets for a catch and take a great multitude of fish! Alas, now we paddle about near shore and catch a few shrimp and boast of our wonderful success.

III. We shall close by noting WHAT IS THE TEACHING THAT YOU AND I MAY GET OUT OF THIS SUBJECT? One lesson is this. The seeking sinner can be saved *now*. If he seeks salvation at once, he can have it at once. Is there a movement in any mind after God? Do you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father"? Have you got as far as that? How long will it take you to get to your Father? Well, I cannot tell you—it is a long way—but let me whisper in your ear that there is another calculation. How long will it take your Father to come to you? The parable proceeds to say, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran." I cannot guess how fast the old gentleman in the parable could run, for hearts are often stronger than legs, but I know that He to whom the parable points when *He* runs, is not to be overtaken! If God runs, my brothers and sisters, what a pace must be meant! Sinner, if you are rising to go to Him, He runs to meet you! "His word runs very swiftly."—

*"Oh, how swift divine compassion
Runs to meet the mourning soul!
And by words of consolation
Makes the wounded spirit whole!"*

We read in the 107th Psalm of those who drew near to the gates of death and in their extremity, at the last gasp, they cried unto the Lord. Immediately, we read, "He sent His word and healed them." The cure was as speedy as it was complete! Why, the Lord can outstrip *time*! Is it not written, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"? This beats the telegraph! You get an answer *before* you send the message, or while you are writing the message, here comes the reply! O poor soul, be comforted! You may have immediate pardon, immediate adoption, and immediate justification! Mercy comes in a moment to you and you may go your way saying, "I have it! I have it! Why have I been looking so long for it, when the Word of God is near me, on my lips and in my heart?" God grant you grace to receive, at this moment, the word which saves the soul.

Another lesson and that has reference to our work for the souls of others. If God's word runs very swiftly, then it can even overtake those who run away from it! Not only can the Lord come quickly to those who *seek* Him, but He can overtake those who hasten away from Him! I can see the sheep running

away. At what a rate they rush! Sheep never run so fast after the shepherd as *away* from him—they are nimble enough when once they get through a gap. Away they go! They are over the hill and out of sight in no time. Will the shepherd catch them? That blessed Word who is their Shepherd, can He overtake the wanderers? Yes, “His word runs very swiftly—“He can overtake the runaways. If a sheep has reached the brink of a precipice, the Great Shepherd runs so swiftly that He can save it even now. I say this to you workers that you may be encouraged to go to sick beds; that you may be encouraged to speak to aged men and women; that you may not think *anybody* is too far gone for Christ. If it were certain that without conversion a person would be in hell in five minutes, it would *still* be both your *duty* and your *privilege* to preach the gospel to him and to do it believing that in the space of *five minutes* the grace of God could save Him!

“Dangerous doctrine,” says an objector, “people will be tempted to put off conversion.” Alas, if they did not forge an excuse out of this truth of God, they would manufacture it out of another, for when men mean to do wrong, any perversion will serve their turn! I cannot deny a truth because wicked men pervert it; that would be ridiculous! A rope is a good thing—would you have us destroy all the ropes in the world because a few madmen hang themselves with them? We will proclaim it to the ends of the earth that the Lord can save at the 11th hour! It is not too late for any of you, however aged you may be. What if you are to die tomorrow? I leave an impression that some here are not far from their end, yet, “His word runs very swiftly,” and even *now* He can save you! The dying thief forbids the idea that any praying penitent shall apply to Christ and find it too late. Postpone not salvation—but if you have delayed for years, make haste at once and may God’s infinite mercy come to you at the same hour.

I close with this further remark. If you and I, dear friends, are not numbered among the unconverted, but are really saved this morning and yet we are very heavy of heart, there is comfort here. The Lord can, at once, give us joy and peace. “I have a great trouble,” you say, “and if I do not get help by tomorrow night, I do not know what will become of me.” Well, God can deliver you by tomorrow night—“His word runs very swiftly.” “Oh, but I have a dread upon my heart; and if I do not soon get rid of it, I shall be driven to despair.” He can console you at once, for the Comforter is already given. “I should like to come to the communion table,” says one. “I have not been there for a long time for I do not feel fit, and I do not think I can be prepared for the solemn service in the short space of one afternoon.” Oh yes, you may, for, “His word runs very swiftly.” If Jesus washes your feet, you shall be clean every whit and clean at once! He can bear you up to the heights of fellowship and bring you into very close union with Himself in a moment of time. Limit not the Almighty as to speed—limit Him not in *any* way—with God all things are possible!

He can cause your dry rod to bud and blossom and bear fruit in an hour. commit yourself to Him and pray Him to make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight and He can do it—and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

[Some years ago we prepared a large work for use at Family Prayer called, “The Interpreter.” It is an arrangement of the Scriptures for daily reading, and short comments of our own are added. We are afraid that the present generation of our readers do not know of it. It cost us two years of steady labor, and we should like to see it largely used. It is a fine volume, and if purchased in the best binding it is a family treasure, to be handed down as an heirloom.—C.H.S.]

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